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**CHAMBERLAIN HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE SOUTH DAKOTA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 14, 2016) — In its 31st year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Ella Byers of Chamberlain High School as its 2015-16 Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year. Byers is the first Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Chamberlain High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the racecourse, distinguishes Byers as South Dakota's best high school girls cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, Byers joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Ryan Hall (1999-00, 2000-01, Big Bear HS, Calif.), Derek Jeter (1991-92, Kalamazoo HS, Mich.), Candace Parker (2001-02, Naperville Central HS, Ill.), Abby Wambach (1997-98, Our Lady of Mercy, N.Y.) and Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.).

The 5-foot-6 freshman raced to the Class A individual state championship this past season with a time of 18:41.2. A 2015 First Team All-State selection, Byers completed an undefeated season this fall and clocked the fastest all-class time at the state meet.

Byers has maintained a 3.85 GPA in the classroom. An accomplished pianist and a voracious reader, she has volunteered locally as a bible camp leader and served as a photographer on the high school yearbook staff.

"Ella Byers has a year-round drive for excellence," said Chamberlain High head coach Garry Winter. "Winning races and having the kind of success she has enjoyed is a nice confirmation of her efforts."

Byers will begin her sophomore year of high school this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Byers joins Gatorade South Dakota Girls Cross Country Runners of the Year Emily Hawkes (2014-15, Madison High School), Tamara Gorman (2013-14, 2012-13 & 2010-11, Stevens High School), Alex Hess (2011-12, Roosevelt High School), Madeleine Takahashi (2009-10, Sturgis Brown High School), Seanna Kautz (2008-09, Roosevelt High School), and Mariah Hofer (2007-08, Yankton High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit www.gatorade.com/poy.

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